

∞ The Family Times ∞

Human-Generated Nonsense

December 25, 2025

Twenty-One and Finally Legal



Ariel's One Year Stats

- 32 INCHES
- 26.9 POUNDS
- TALKING (MAMA, DADA, NANAS)
- SIGNING (MILK, WATER, OPEN)
- READING 1 WORD (OPEN)
- WALKING
- CLIMBING
- DANCING
- GETTING INTO EVERYTHING
- BEING STUBBORN ✓



ARE YOU AARON RUGG'S PARENTS?

LEARN WHY WE KEPT GETTING ASKED THIS QUESTION
IN 2025 ON PAGES Co 2, Co3, Te, AND Tp.

SCRIPTURE - LEAGUE -

SCRIPTURE LEAGUE

BY ANDREW

Early last year, we announced our ideas for Scripture League, an online Bible game show. We created it by streaming the contestants videos into a 3d studio made in Unreal.

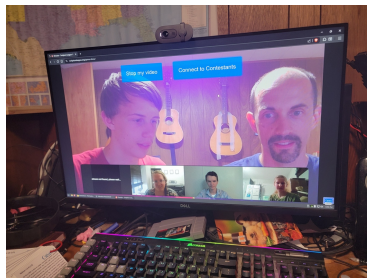
We scheduled a test show, and pretty quickly, four contestants signed up. Now we just had to make it work. According to the McCann Family motto, *crescit sub pondere virtus*, and in the words of Leonard Bernstein: "To achieve great things, two things are needed; a plan, and not quite enough time."

We were able to program the basic mechanics in time for the date, but we weren't able to get all the bells and whistles that could be quite useful. For example, while the program was set to give Alexander all his lines, we weren't able to let him see the game show, or hear it for that matter. He was basically blind and deaf except for the lines and had to pretend he understood everything that was going on. Also, we tried to test it, but it didn't work very well, so we just had to hope it would work better when people weren't connecting from the same internet and overloading it. He actually did quite well, considering the circumstances, and while there were several glitches that needed to be fixed, it worked out great and our contestants really liked the experience.

When Bible Bee released that they were going to be studying Genesis 1-5, we decided to make that our study passage too. We were planning to study Genesis 1-3 for our first season anyway, and it would allow more people to be able to participate in Scripture League and Bible Bee at the same time. Since our stage could take four contestants, we decided to do four preliminary rounds, the winners of which would advance to the finals.

Our first round didn't go so well. One of the participants lost battery, and we just had to finish it without him. The round didn't go too badly otherwise, but it was somewhat of a disappointment. However, the next round went relatively well. Most of the bugs were fixed, and no one dropped out. The third round sadly had a bug with Reference Recall, but we were able to fix it by the next round, which went pretty flawlessly. For the Finals we also decided to implement a new round to make it more interesting, and we weren't sure if that would work. But thankfully, God allowed this round to work too.

Scripture League's first season went surprisingly well. While several things broke, God allowed us to fix them relatively quickly. All of our contestants really enjoyed it, and we were really encouraged for the next season. Soli Deo Gloria! 📺



A

The Family Times

12/25/25

Our House



MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM OUR HOUSE TO YOURS!



For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Romans 3:23-26

**I'm VERY glad Santa is not real,
because if he was, everyone in the
world would just get coal.**

—Abigail



Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Luke 2:10-14





Saige Paints The Sky

By Abigail

Saige is just going back to school, from summer break. Her best friend Tessa was at a music camp, because she likes music. But when she comes back to school, there is a new girl that came from Tessa's music class, her name is Dylan. Tessa seems to have grown to like Dylan, could this be the end of being very best friends?

There is another new girl in the class, her name is Gabbie. She and Saige become friends as well. Saige is broken down when the teacher says that there will be no art this year. Music will be this year; next year there will be art, but no music. After school Saige visits her grandma (everybody calls her grandma Mimi) Saige tells Mimi about her troubles, Mimi tells her that she should stand up and protest.

Another day Saige finds Dylan and Tessa together playing piano and singing. She feels sad. But then Tessa decides to come to and play and paint and play music, she and Tessa played together just like old times. She was so happy. Saige told Mimi about it, then the dog began barking and Mimi told her to keep talking and that she would see what was bothering the dog. Suddenly there is a crash, her grandma has fallen! She visits her in a gloomy hospital room. Her grandma has broken both her leg and wrist. Saige realizes how gloomy and beige the room looks. The next day she has an idea for a protest... **A Day Of Beige.**

The idea of the protest: they would pass out fliers and tell people to wear only beige on Monday, with a hope that the teachers would notice how gloomy the class looked. They also do a press conference but it is known that Saige has stage fright, and she ran offstage. The principle said that an after school art class would be at least five thousand dollars. Saige decides to ride her grandma's horse in the parade, because of her grandma's fall. And they are also trying to raise money for art. Dylan told Saige that selling lemonade will not be enough, but they try. They try a lemonade stand, a car wash, and a bake sale. They've raised hardly any money.

Eventually Dylan and Tessa stop fundraising with Saige, and go to make their own fundraiser: A Music And Dance Concert.

Even when Saige has an idea for both of the teams to work together her, Tessa, and Dylan just get in a big fight. Saige is having trouble with riding the horses with fancy tricks. And Mimi has been the best artist around, but now that she broke her wrist and her leg she won't do any art. When Saige talks to her about what is happening with her friends, and asks if she wants to do some art, her grandma declines and she and Saige get in a fight. Tessa says that Dylan took over everything, she apologizes and they decide to make a Show with about art with song and dance, Dylan apologizes and helps. But they don't have enough money. Saige puts away her stage fright, and goes on stage and asks people for the money. They get enough money!

Then it is time for the parade, Saige is riding nice and steady, but then, she stops for about fifteen seconds, and looks at the people taking pictures of her, then to make up for it she does a really big trick.

I really like this movie. I like the American Girl book and movies and I like art. I got this movie for my art birthday.



Grandpa Easter Games

By Alexander

This Easter Grandpa Jeff brought a bunch of games. The first was where we tried to roll chocolate eggs into the cups taped to the side of the table. If we got it into the big cups, we got 1 dollar. If we got it in the small cup, we got 5 dollars. If we missed... we keep the egg. So we did oldest to youngest, Aaron went and missed, Andrew went and missed, I went and it looped around the starting line so I got to go again. Then I tried again and it would have perfectly landed in the 5 dollar cup had it had a bit more speed. So I missed as well. I think the first one was a cup stacking game where we'd try to stack all the cups up and take them all down the fastest. I'm pretty sure Grandpa won that one. Then we all chose balloons with paper in them, and we took turns popping them to see what was inside. I'm pretty sure every balloon said take a golden egg but some had extra good things or bad things. I just got "take a golden egg", but Aaron got "take a golden egg and next time the grand-kids are on a sleepover choose an activity to do." I think the options were bowling, trampoline park, and maybe something else.





Q&MurdleQ

By Aaron

Murdle is a puzzle book by G.T. Karber. It follows the adventures of Deductive Logico as he goes about his normal business—except that wherever he goes it seems there's always been a murder. The puzzles consist of three aspects: suspects, weapons, and locations. In every case, each suspect had exactly one weapon and was in one location with nobody else. In later levels, a fourth aspect is added; each suspect now has a unique motive as well. In some levels, players are also required to examine the statements of the suspects; the murderer will always lie, while the others will tell the truth (even if they feature as murderers in other cases, strangely enough.)

The book itself does have a plot, though it's a bit scattered and every thing is punctuated by murders to solve (or fake murders occasionally.) Logico gets invited to a fancy dinner, but then has to solve the mystery of the death of a famous murder mystery author, Dame Obsidian. All her books mention clues that lead him to more murders and eventually to the discovery that she actually faked her own murder. Logico arrests her and throws her in jail but she fakes her murder and gets out again.

In the next set of stories, Logico investigates various cults and other random stuff with a detective named Inspector Irratino, who eventually gets killed. Then Logico investigates *his* murder and finds that Irratino faked his murder. Finally, Logico tries to make a movie about murder mysteries and then investigates murders in Hollywood. (It ties things up because Dame Obsidian magically reappears to give Logico the solution.)

Mandie Book 18: The Jumping Juniper

By ABIGAIL

During their sightseeing in Europe Mandie and her friends: Celia, Jonathan, Grandmother Taft, Senator Morton, plus Mandie's rambunctious, but precious white kitten Snowball, have been invited by a baroness to her castle.

On the way to the Castle the carriage has an accident. They all get to the castle.

Now at the castle there is a rumor about a humongous tree that jumps at night!

Mandie and her friends watch closely at the Tree to see if it moves, meanwhile, the baroness's rude grandson (Rupert) seems suspicious, he disappears and reappears randomly. He makes many mean remarks often when he is by them, and no one else is.

They find out that he is engaged to a woman named: Elsa.

They listen in on him talking to a woman, whose name is Lady Catharine.

Rupert sends her on a strange mission, trying to sell some land to spite his mother who has moved to America! They also find out that Rupert is responsible for the carriage accident, and intends to pay the driver once he gets the money from selling the land.

One rainy morning Mandie, Celia, Jonathan, and Snowball, all go out to watch the tree... which is actually jumping!

Snowball runs into a pipe, and Mandie runs after her, but in there, there are long things that feel kind of like snakes! She runs out, however she has not yet retrieved Snowball. Then her Adopted Uncle Ned, who promised her father before he died to look after Mandie, comes and gets Snowball, and says that the snake-like things are the roots of the tree, when water goes through the pipe, the roots jiggle, and make the tree look like its jumping!

Later, Snowball runs away, towards the lake, trying to get Snowball, she falls

in.....

.....

.....

Uncle Ned is holding Mandie, Mandie thanks Uncle Ned for saving her, but he tells her Rupert has pulled her out!

Later all things are straightened out with Rupert.

On going through (almost) every book on the boys' bookshelves...

Aaron: "I've read that one already."

Andrew: "I read a chapter (or two or three) of that before I got stopped and gave up."

Alexander, alternating between: "I read random snippets of that when I was supposed to be doing my math."

"I should really read that one sometime."

"I've seen the cover of that book before."



The Protectorate Wars, Book III: Rogue

By ANDREW

The Protectorate wars is a steampunk series set in the land of the Fertile Plains. It centers around the country of Alönia. Alönia is a powerful republic, and has a symbiotic relationship with the city state of Armstad. Armstad is sandwiched between two other powerful countries, Viörn and Berg. The two countries massively invaded Armstad in the First Protectorate War, and the city state was only saved by the vigilance of General David Ike, captain of the Alönian armada.

The series begins 60 years after the first Protectorate War, with David Ike III as it's main character. David is a brilliant politician and gets appointed as an aide in the office of Equalist William Blythe. He proves to be and invaluable, and helps Blythe achieve the office of speaker. However, he soon discovers the corruption in the Equalist party, and eventually switches to the opposing Pragmatic side, and helps them replace Blythe with Speaker Don Johnson.

In Rogue, David is appointed as Johnson's ambassador to the Outlands.

The Outlanders are made up of various syndicates united together by the Overlord. The Outlanders are a backstabbing and conniving bunch, living in a culture where death is commonplace and all respect goes to the best shooter. It is quite a contrast to the cultured, educated, and refined lands of Alönia.

David's mission is to win the Outlanders to the side of Alönia, as they need as many allies as they can get in the face of the impending Second Protectorate War, especially with the amount of treachery already occurring in the Alönian government. His guide to the outlands is an old friend named Francisco, who was one of the most famous outlander assassins.

In order to befriend the Outlanders, David must overcome the cultural barrier, showing to the Outlanders that he is worthy of their respect by proving his prowess in battle. Francisco is confronted with things that he had hoped to leave behind and is forced to face his past.

The Protectorate Wars series has a very interesting array of technology, especially the different classes of Airships. It also bears similarity to a political commentary. The story is complicated and often unexpected, making it a thrilling read, albeit some swearing, grammatical, and spelling mistakes.

Uncle Ben: Or, "Oligopoly", which is definitely a word

Nate: Is now and probably evermore



The Lord of the Rings

By ALEXANDER

The Lord of the Rings is a trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien, which begins with the smallest creatures of all and turns them into the heroes of the story: Hobbits. Hobbits are short, and don't often wear shoes. Hobbits live in the Shire, comfortably away from the other big folk, quite ready to ignore the outside world as long as it ignored them. Despite this, the heroes begin a grand adventure trekking through mountains, valleys, and the great kingdoms of men.

My favorite thing about this series is all of the detail and culture Tolkien puts into his countries.

Andrew:
I'm very suggestive.

Dad:
How do you know?

Andrew:
Someone told me.

And then both Josephine Haab *and* Grace Wanliss came up and congratulated me and I walked in a daze for the rest of the night. Well, not really but you know what I mean. It was like meeting two movie stars at once, only better because they were congratulating *me* and they weren't actually movie stars. Have I mentioned that alumni are awesome yet? – Aaron after BB finals



Growth

By JOANNA

2025 was a year of growth! We settled into our rhythm as a family of four and watched the kids flourish. Rowan's creativity and sense of adventure really took off this year. She's been an avid artist of all mediums. Rowan (and Caleb and Jo) completed the local library's 1000 book challenge, earning her a crown and photograph on the library's wall of fame. In September she began preschool at Meeting House Nursery School, where her teachers' report she's an excellent friend and helper.



Arlo has grown into his title of our "Christmas ham". He's one of the smiliest, social babies you'll ever meet. The year watched him progress from baby blob to walking, climbing, dancing tot. His main interests include: climbing up/down stairs, emptying cabinets, and anything his sister is doing.

Despite the restrictions of nap/bedtimes, we've managed to get out of the house and make some great family memories. On top of several trips back to the Chicago area to see family, we took a weekend vacation in Door County. We also spent lots of time at local favorites like Olbrich

Botanical Gardens, Devil's Lake State Park, Little America amusement park (where Rowan discovered a newfound love of roller coasters), and several apple orchards within a stone's throw of Verona.



Arlo One Year Stats

- 99.6 PERCENTILE (19.5 INCHES) FOR HEAD CIRCUMFERENCE
- 61.7 PERCENTILE (30.2 INCHES) FOR HEIGHT
- CURRENT WORDS INCLUDE: MAMA, DADA, UH-OH, AND DOWN
- SMILING, WALKING, CLIMBING, DANCING
- EMPTYING THE CABINETS
- DIVING INTO CAKE



"CLOSE THE DOOR, DAD! I NEED MY GRANDMA MARY TIME!" – ROWAN

Princess Rowan





Summer Study Bible Bee

BY ABIGAIL

During the Summer there was a easy Study for Bible Bee. We studied a workbook, and we learned fifteen passages. And each month our family invited other Bible Bee Family's for an official Bible Bee Summer Meeting at our house. We'd sing, dad would talk, then we'd do a study game about Genesis. After that we played and had snacks.

In August we had a Proclaim Day, where we would take a test and recite two passages. We went to the church building the pastor had let us use, so

we could get ready. My little sister and I just played until somebody came. When more people had come, we started. We sang hymns and my dad did a speech, then we did the recitations. My brother did an extra long passage. Then we had cake, snacks etc. then we played. Inside and outside. When most people had gone, we went home but some friends and grandparents came over to our house so we could eat and play some more.



Oral Recitation Round

BY ANDREW

The Oral Recitation round is one of Bible Bee's two preliminary rounds. The other round is the Multiple Choice Test, and the scores are combined from both rounds to determine who will advance to semifinals. In Orals, you have to recite 12 passages in 8 minutes. In order to finish the challenge you need to recite at an average of at least 150 words per minute in Seniors.

To help prepare for Orals, Dad programmed a Mock Orals Generator that would try to pick 12 realistic Orals passages. Since the passages have to be able to be recited in 8 minutes, we were able to narrow it down from 107 total passages to about 61 reasonable Orals passages. Aaron was able to get perfect Mock Orals since the first week all the memory passages were released. I wasn't able to get many perfect until a couple weeks before Orals, and as the date drew closer I had an increasing tendency to slur and mispronounce the words.

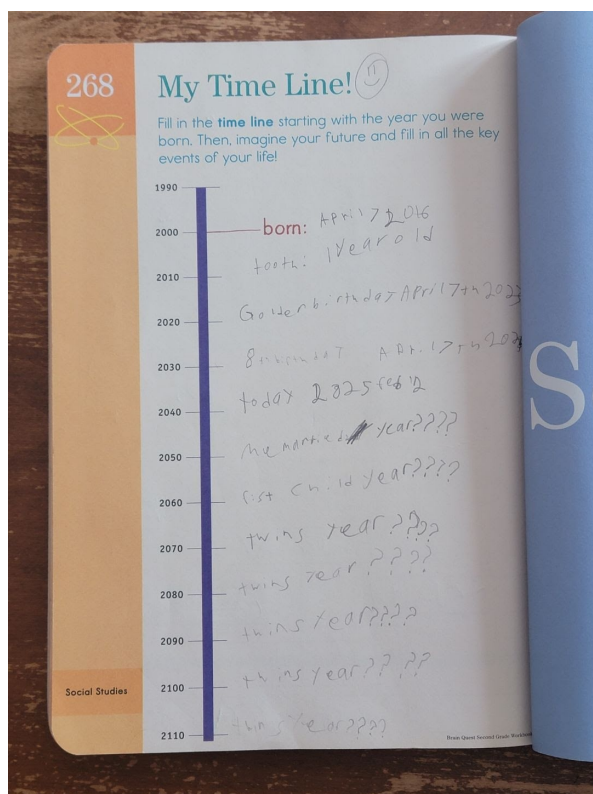
The orals passages were especially hard this year, because we had several parallel passages talking about the same event, as well as verses from the epistles talking about similar things, and several passages with very long lists. And this year we also got put in Orals group D, the last group to recite, which meant we had all morning to get nervous. Eventually the orals deadline finally came and after listening to the Bible Bee staff explain the rules to us, we finally got to sit outside our Orals room waiting for them to get ready. For some reason I was last to go in out of our family this time but finally it was my turn.

I made it up to the microphone, told them my name and Bible version, and started reciting. They started of with one of the first passages they had released this year, so I thought I could do it easily, but all of a sudden I mispronounce God as guide. I considered restarting, (you can do this once per passage) but I didn't want to risk making an actual mistake and hoped for the best. It went on relatively well from there, until I skipped Thaddeus in one of the lists of the disciples. I restarted and was as sure as I could be that I had got it right, but I really couldn't be sure until they release the scores later.

I was getting near the end of the passages (I was counting on my fingers) and I noticed that I had more than a minute left on the clock. *They're going to pull up a long one for the last one, aren't they?* Sure enough, I got Galatians 5:14-21. It was the second longest passage we thought could be asked in orals, and contained a very long list of the works of the flesh.

I completed the round with about half a minute left on the clock. I hadn't detected any mistakes, but I anticipated that I had done something wrong, especially when I found out Aaron had made a mistake. During the announcements I was somewhat worried I would be disappointed if my name wasn't called. I got called up onto Bible Bee's stage for the Perfect Oral announcements for the first time. Alexander received perfect orals too. I was really hoping I would make it to semifinals this year, but I was thankfully content with perfect orals, especially when several of the semifinalists didn't get it. ☺





Sometimes correcting schoolwork is as good as comics.

On this day Abigail decided she wants 11 kids.
"First one to get the hang of being a mom, and then on to efficiency." —Abigail

"SUNDAY, MONDAY, TUESDAY, TENS DAY..." —ATTALIA

"My study group decided to memorize Genesis 1-5. Not that you have to do well of course, but you know, peer pressure." —Aaron

Figuring Out Theme Questions in Bible Bee



Question 45 of 75

Which of these themes is NOT present in Ephesians 1?

- ☐ A. A Present Unity of the Earthly and the Spiritual
- ☒ B. God's Will Enacted
- ☐ C. An Inheritance Above the Heavens
- ☐ D. An Unceasing Prayer for Wisdom

Clear selection

Question 45 of 75

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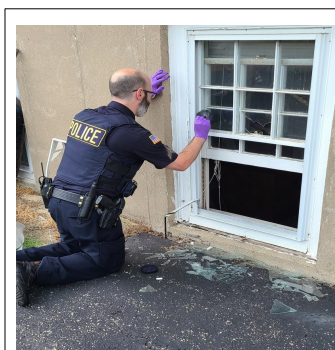
Clear selection

Question 45 of 75

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- ☐ D. An Unceasing Prayer for Wisdom

Clear selection



"It took Nate and I a while to figure out that Grandpa Jeff wasn't joking about taking Abigail to her first crime scene." —Anna



My welcome after not playing for 20+ years.



Bible Bee Junior Semi-finals

BY ALEXANDER

This year I made it to Semifinals. Unfortunately for me, I had only recently been able to get all my two carders perfect, the most crucial element for survival in Rounds 1 and 4.

Anyways when I got called up, I was excited, though I knew I wouldn't be able to do well. Mom, of course, thought that if there was anyone in my position that could pull it off, it was me. But moms are moms. I had worked especially hard this year to get perfect orals (see Andrew's article), so

the one-carders in Round 2 would be easy. Round 3 was the question round, and Mom thought I would do well in that. So Rounds 1 and 4 were going to be the hardest.

So an hour before the show was going to start, I arrived at the spot we were supposed to arrive at. I had competed with at least 7 of the semifinalists last year. There were 7 boys and 8 girls and 4 KJVers! A couple of the Semifinalists were late. Probably due to the fact that they had siblings in Primary Semis and the time they were supposed to show up was during it.

After they arrived we went backstage and to the bathroom. After that we just kinda sat and waited for a really long time for the tech team to come back from lunch so we could get our mics on. I have no idea what they were eating, but whatever it was they sure took their time. After that we had to wait for another long time for the moderators to get ready. While we were waiting, Atticus Lake popped his head through the curtain and said hi. Surprising, but it gave us a chance to congratulate him on moving on to Finals. I had a girl on either side of me and they happened to be great friends, so that was kind of awkward.

So after the countdown finished the moderators talked for nearly 10 minutes. Towards the end of that they brought us all up to stand close to the stage and wait for them to stop talking so we could walk up. We were goofing around a lot and nearly messed up the line and had to be told to be quiet several times. We walked up, listen to them talk **again**, then walked down.

Backstage the girl to my left (Esther Haab) was asking her friend to my right (Emily Martin) the beginnings of random passages so she didn't forget. One could tell she was pretty nervous. So, when her turn came she walked up on stage... and got Ephesians 2:1-10 (a.k.a. one of the easiest 2-carders this year since our study passage was Ephesians.) All that worrying for nothing.

My turn came, so they called me up on stage and I stood, waiting for them to say my passage so I could get it over with. Instead, something else happened. Their wifi crashed. As for why they were using wifi, I don't know, but since it crashed I had to stand up there until they gave my passage to the wrong moderator. Joel 2:14-21. Not the best. In fact, it was much closer to the worst. I suspected that I was making a mistake, but I really wanted to avoid timing out, so I went with my gut.

One of my KJV friends had checked me backstage so I knew that I was probably eliminated, which I was. Though honestly I hadn't memorized many Finals passages, and it was also good to be done. So I tried to bide my time by checking my KJV friends and being sad when someone I knew got eliminated. The End.

(Mom/Editor's note: I wasn't surprised at all when Alexander advanced to semifinals this year. He worked hard. And it was possible for him to advance, it just depended on which passages were chosen for him and how they came out. And he was better prepared for the question round than last year. That's not mom colored glasses, that's knowing my son and helping him prepare for months. I felt really bad that Alexander had to stand there awkwardly for a wifi outage. But he still did really well with the Joel passage. It just genuinely wasn't his strongest passage.

Alexander you'll always be Alexander the Great in my book. This way you got to hang out with friends more, and someone more prepared for finals got in. God is good all the time.)



Photo Credit: [Nadia Michaela](#)



Bible Bee Senior Finals

By AARON

Out of the initial thousands of children who take the Bible Bee Summer Study, only a hundred and twenty from each age division advance to the national competition. Out of those kids, only fifteen advance to the Semifinals. After three long recitations and a gauntlet of trivia questions, five semifinalists advance to the Finals—and by God’s grace, I was one of them.

The five finalists, were, obviously, extremely good. One of the girls was rather new to Finals, as was I, but another had gotten to Finals last year and placed third. As for the other two finalists, Jedidiah and Hannah, they were part of my study group this year. We’d done lots of training together for all areas of the competition, especially Finals, and while we were all good friends we were all extremely competitive and very, very fast. No matter the outcome, it was sure to be an exciting Finals.

Finals has five different rounds, though the main point swings happen in the third and fourth rounds. The first round is a recitation round similar to the ones in Semifinals, but instead of eliminating people who make mistakes each mistake simply deducts 100 points from your score. The passages were long (about 400 words, significantly longer than the Gettysburg Address) but because we didn’t have to worry about being eliminated



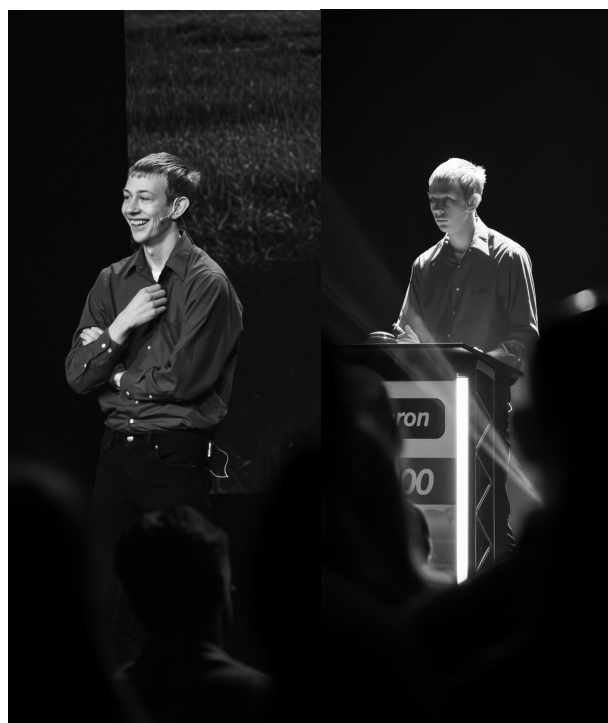
Aaron's too tall. Photo credit: [Nadia Michaela](#)

we could be a little more relaxed. Most of us achieved perfect recitations this round.

The second round was a short answer question round. The moderators would read a question and we would have twenty seconds to write the answer down on our iPads. If we answered correctly, we would receive points ranging from 50–250 based on the value of the question; if we didn’t, we would receive 0 points.

Fifth place dropped behind during this round, but aside from that there was barely any change. The top four contestants, including me, Jedidiah, and Hannah, all answered all but one of the questions correctly, and the scores were basically tied going into the third round.

The third round was the buzzer recitation round. During the course of the competition, we had memorized about fifty short (~100 word) passages. Here, the moderators would ask us a question about these memory passages; which memory passage mentions an angel, or the place where Elijah stood up against the prophets of Baal. (cont.)



Photo(s) Credit:
[Bronwyn Hagey](#)



Bible Bee Senior Finals (cont.)

By AARON

If we thought we knew it, we could buzz in; if we were right, we would have to recite that passage correctly to receive 500 points. If we made two or more mistakes, we wouldn't get any points, and if we said the wrong passage, we would lose points.

An interesting quirk about the buzzer system Bible Bee uses is that you can buzz in at any point, including while the question is still being read. This means that contestants will sometimes buzz in hoping to guess what the rest of the question would have been in order to beat the other contestants to the punch.

There were only five questions in this round, and me and Hannah answered all of them—I got two and Hannah got three, putting us 1200 and 1700 points above the rest of the field. That rather set the tone for the rest of the Finals.

There was one scary moment when I buzzed in on a question and couldn't think of the answer. Thankfully, I remembered it at the last second and blurted it out just before the timer ended to score the full 500 points.

The fourth round was another buzzer round. This time, the questions could be about anything and we wouldn't have to recite. We would receive 300 points for a correct question and -150 points for an incorrect question. There were fifteen questions in this round, making it the most valuable round of all by a huge margin.

Hannah was able to beat me this round, answering five questions to my three. It might have had a little bit to do with the buzzers—they were old and didn't always seem to respond when I pressed them—but Hannah was definitely better than I was. And she had been in Finals three (!) times before, so what can you expect?

At this point Hannah was a thousand points above me and I was 1350 points above the rest of the pack, so the placings were already pretty much determined. The final round was another, even longer recitation round (about 500 words, three straight minutes of speaking clearly with no mistakes) but since we all knew our passages so well it was considered fairly unlikely that anyone would make mistakes large enough to change the final placings.

Indeed, five recitations later everyone but fifth place had gotten a perfect recitation. Jedidiah was third, I was second, and Hannah was first—not a bad showing for our study group! It was slightly disappointing not to win, but God knows best and Hannah definitely deserved it. Also, first place isn't allowed to compete in Bible Bee again, so this way I can still come back and compete next year, Lord willing. 🙏

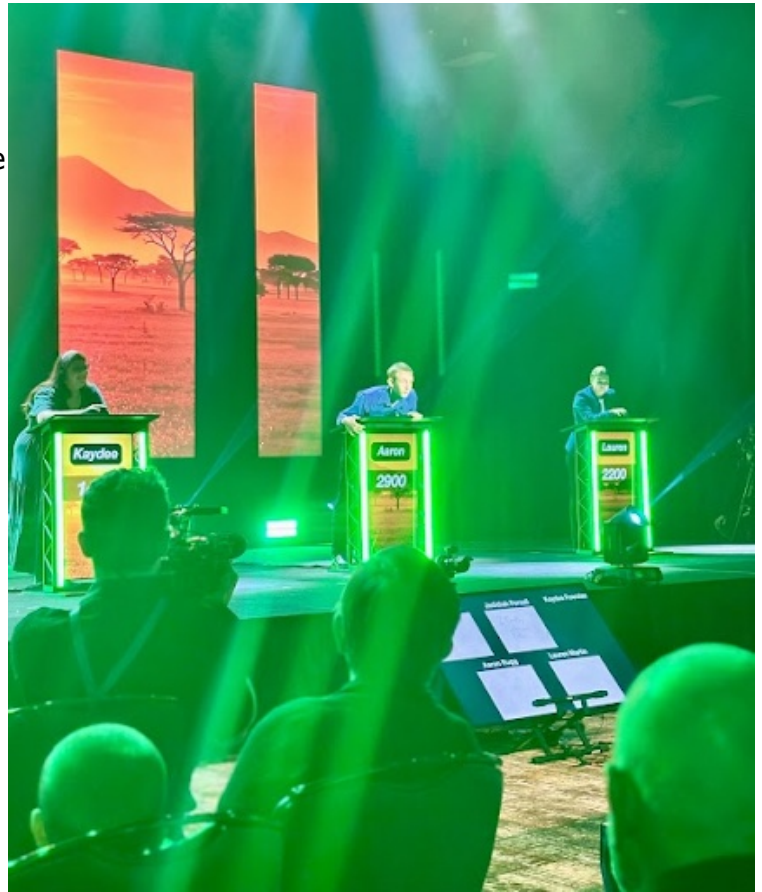


Photo credit: Christiana Pepper

"Okay, I know this one. No, I don't. Why on earth did I buzz in? An angel? An archangel? No, Jude 1:3–21 is too long. Wait, I studied this. A cherub. A cherub's an angel. What's the reference you're running out of time..."

"SECONDSAMUELTWENTYTWOFOFIVETOFOURTEEN"
This was subsequently dubbed "hands-down the best part of Finals of any division."



BEAUTIFUL BALLET

By ABIGAIL

For a long time I have been wanting to do ballet, and finally, this past summer I had gotten my wish. My mom took me to a christian ballet class. I liked my teacher, she was nice.

We start out by sitting down and stretching. While we practice she plays music on a speaker.

Then we move to the bar. We hold onto the bar and do moves like Rond de Jambe. Where you move your feet in a D pattern. The bar is for your balance.

Then after we do some stuff on the bar we go to the middle of the room and practice stuff. Some of the stuff is to help your balance. Then we do a free dance. We take colorful scarves and stuff like that and do what ever we want to do. Or sometimes we take a parachute and most of us grab the loops and lift it up and down and one person goes under and the parachute falls on them, we take turns. And sometimes we did musical dots, its like musical chairs, but we use dots, she says a kind of dance like: Tap, and she plays Tap music and we try our best tap: even though I don't think any of us knew tap, and we tap around the dots until she stops the music, then we all try to get on a dot, there is one less dot than the number of people, so whoever does not get on a dot is out and helps the teacher with the music. And then she does a different type of dance. At the end of the activity, she gives us each a sticker, but if we had played musical dots, the winner gets two stickers.

I made friends with a girl named Elinor. All of the girls are short, except me and Elinor, they all look young except me and Elinor, but they all are about my age, Elinor is way taller than me, but I am the oldest of the class.

Then for the last few weeks we start to learn a dance. We do it to the Doe-a-Deer song.

At the last class, instead of an activity the parents come in and they watch us. First the teacher calls out a move, and we are suppose to do it, then after that we do the dance.

Ballet was very fun, I want to do it next year.



Abigail's last class had a mini performance for the parents. First they showed off different individual moves that they had learned over the summer and then the whole choreographed Doe-Re-Mi song from Sound of Music. This lovely Arabesque goes along with La.

Ballet class was good practice for Abigail's balance and we were very impressed with her classy and kind instructor.



Mom And Me Date

By ABIGAIL

My mom and I went to steak and shake and each got a shake, I got a Cookie dough shake, and mom got a Reese's Pieces shake, I couldn't believe how big they were! They worked better if you used a spoon, because it was so big. We put them in cups so we could take home. Across the street was hobby lobby. Mom bought some paints for me. It was very fun.

"It's not gambling, because I made the game and I did not call it gambling." —Abigail

"Can you just stop being so HAPPY!!!" —Abigail

"Don't look at me, I'm the good one!" —Attalia

"Do you want a cookie?"

"No, I want to save room for tomorrow." —Attalia

"Flavanoids?!? Are those bad guys?" —Attalia

"No! Good guys!" —Alexander

"Maybe later."

"But later isn't here!" —Attalia

"Should we get this one or this one?" —Mom

"I think this kind of soup looks better for dinner, but by one you mean three right?" —Alexander

"Four actually. Four giant cans of soup plus sandwiches for one dinner for our family." —Mom



Crêpes Suzette

Aaron's cooking skills continue to improve. This year he made (non-alcoholic) Crêpes Suzette for Father's Day that were amazing. He prefers more efficient desserts like chocolate chip cookies and truffles but can now handle complex multi-step recipes on his own too.



"I LOVE ROWAN. SHE'S
MY BEST FRIEND."
— ATTALIA



HOW DID THEY GET THE
TUNA CANS IN THE
FISHING NET? — ATTALIA



Grandma Mary's 70th Birthday

BY ANDREW

For Grandma Mary's 70th present, we wanted to make her something great, and since everyone else was going to give her a piano, we (Rugg Bros) decided to create a game to help her learn how to use it.

We immediately began planning a complicated story

titled "Maria's Quest" complete with a party, villains, and more. We realized that we wouldn't be able to complete it and focused more on the game design. We wanted her to be able to plug the piano into the computer and be able to use it to play the game using the piano. We made it so she could select the songs by swiping up and down on the piano keys and double tapping a single key. We also designed 3 games: one for getting the rhythm of a song, another for learning the sheet music of a song, and the master game which was just playing the song normally.

We also took 70 pictures of ourselves with a "Happy Birthday Grandma Mary" sign in different places, like the living room, dining room, yard, roof, etc. etc. We also colored 70 pictures of cats to tape up throughout Grandma Mary's house.

Grandma's birthday went pretty well. After playing an epic round of Oligarchy, we were able to land and transport "The Eagle" without Grandma knowing until we gave it to her, and she was able to open her present and discover the keyboard. We then set it up for her and plugged it into Maria's Quest. Although it had only basic functionality (and not all of that worked) it was still pretty fun, and I think Grandpa especially liked the secret song we put in. 🎮



Work, Sleep, Play

BY AARON

After Grandma's birthday, my brothers and I stayed over a few extra days to help him with some projects. We helped drain the pond, fish out the weeds, and take out some of the bigger rocks so the fish would have more room in the pond. We also helped redo the fence—since there were weeds growing in between Grandpa's fence and the neighbors, we took the fence off and dug up the strip of land in between the fences. We leveled it as best we could and put weed barrier cloth down, then several wheelbarrows of bricks to keep the cloth down. We also adjusted the height of the fence so it would be level.

We did do fun stuff too. We ate ice cream and cake, made pancakes with circus peanuts and other candies in them, and played Oligarchy at least once. On the last day, after we had finished all the work on the pond, we had lunch at Chick-Fil-A before heading back home. ✨

Ideas Accomplished for Grandma Mary's Birthday:

- Keyboard
- Cheesecake
- 70 cat pictures
- 70 unique birthday pictures
- Update family tree pictures
- Family party

Ideas that were abandoned:

- 70 cats
- Cat treat cake
- Performing Cats the musical
- Prostate surgery





The Making of Oligarchy

This year was Grandpa Jeff's 70th birthday, and we wanted to get him a special present. We decided that a homemade present would be the best, so we decided to make a game. Since Grandpa Jeff liked making the original Oligarchy, we decided to remake it—but with Police Diamond characters as the players.

We had several lively discussions about gameplay and balancing the characters. There were several suggestions to make it "better than Monopoly" including several suggestions about armed combat, but I kept pointing out that every change we made from the original Monopoly would have to be thoroughly play-tested to ensure the game was balanced.

The main change, aside from rebranding, was to make the expectation that players would eventually get richer and richer to attain a certain level of wealth or affluence, as opposed to Monopoly's bankruptcy win condition. The way we chose to accomplish that was through adding lots and lots of custom "Chance" cards.

To make play-testing and tweaking the rules easier, I made a minimalist online game so we could play before all the graphics were completed.

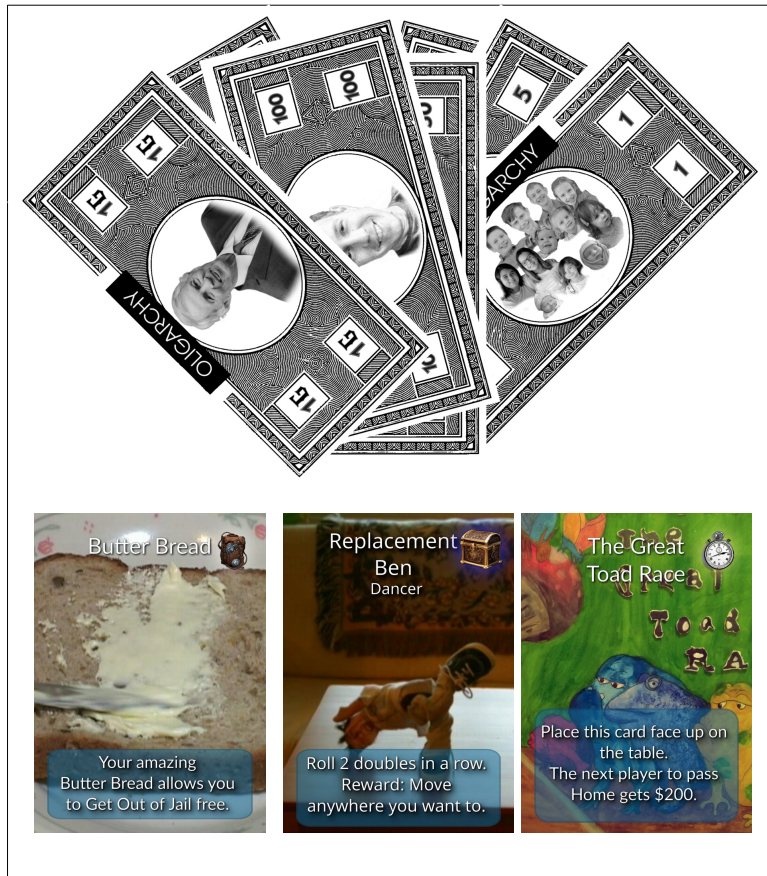
Once the rules were finally hammered out and the final layout of the board designed, it was time to begin construction—with about a week to do so.

We designed the bills from an online template and replaced them with more suitable characters, then printed them out on colored paper. Alexander did most of the work on this, I think.

Then there were the cards to make. Fortunately we had SVG templates from Kingdom of the Unseen, so all we had to make were PNGs. We used Flux, a text-to-image model hosted locally on Dad's computer, to make some. Others we took from pictures and videos (mostly Replacement Ben.)

Then we printed them on card stock, cut them out with a paper cutter, and rounded the corners.

Then there was the matter of the game pieces, which Andrew designed and 3D printed. There were seven unique character pieces and special buildings, along with houses, hotels, banks, greenhouses, and parks.



The board also had to be designed. After some discussion we decided to laser-burn it on a wood blank and insert that into a picture frame to make it look nice. Because we were also working on other projects like Guess Who and Story Cubes I ended up starting the burn the day before Grandpa's birthday. I started it in the morning, so there should have been plenty of time. Unfortunately about halfway through the power went out and I couldn't restart the burn where it left off, so I had to restart the entire thing on the other side. It finished around 9:00 PM and I, Mom, and Dad spent the next three hours painting in all the colors.

The end result looked pretty good! The game was fun to play too, even though it took quite a while.

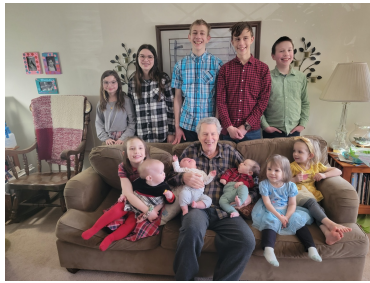




Grandpa Jeff's 70th Birthday

BY ANDREW

For Grandpa's 70th birthday, we wanted to do something really big. Uncle Ben suggested making a board game, and after some discussion, Uncle Ben and his family began work on Petal Perch Pandemonium, and we began work on Oligarchy: Police Diamonds Edition.



Unfortunately, making Oligarchy took a lot of work, and it wasn't really nearing completion near Grandpa's actual birthday. Fortunately, the full party was delayed, and we were able to come give Grandpa a couple of smaller presents while we continued work on Oligarchy.

We rebranded Guess Who by inserting family photos and Police Diamonds characters on the tiles. We also laser burned some Police Diamonds story cubes. These games were a lot of fun and made Grandpa really happy.

After another month, we were able to present Oligarchy to Grandpa at his birthday party at the same time as Uncle Ben's Pedal Perch Pandemonium. We didn't play Oligarchy until later, but were able to let Grandpa beat us in Petal Perch Pandemonium by a rather close shave. We had gotten most of the flowers and were almost all the way back to our nests when Grandpa photographed the last bird.

Every game given to Grandpa was great, and though they were probably partly gifts for us, Grandpa loved them too.



Davidhmeier Study Party

BY ALEXANDER RUGG

This year for the Davidhmeier Study Party, I decided to make a game. There were three teams: Blue, Red, and Green.



Each team tried to collect all six pieces of the armor of the Lord, by answering a question for each piece. If they missed it, the next team would try, and it would go down the line.

Sadly, the Blue team won.

At the study party we also did Mock Orals and a practice test, ate a lot of pizza and candy, and played. We played with Ezekiel's remote control car and Joseph's remote control plane. It was a really fun day at our friends' farm.





Girls' Sleepover at Rugg Grandparents

By ABIGAIL

My little sister Attalia and I went to one of our grandparents for a sleepover. We Went shopping the first day and my Great-Grandma came for dinner. That night we watched the [Frozen Movie 1](#).

The next day we went swimming with my great-grandma. And we went to a park called Phillips park. It has a garden, a zoo, a play ground, a VERY SMALL museum, and a splash pad. Well, at least thats all we went to. Oh and there was a water fall. That night we watched [Frozen Movie 2](#).

The next day we painted wooden butterfly's etc. Then we were taken back.



Girls' Sleepover at Fritz Grandparents

By ABIGAIL

My little sister (Attalia) and I went on a sleepover... JUST HER AND ME!!! I had to work hard on my school to be able to go to our own sleepover. So My Brother Alexander's Birthday was on October 6th. And Alexander had his Birthday party on the 11th, I think. We invited a lot of people, Both sides of our grandparents came, once the grandparents that we were going to have a sleepover with started to get ready to go, we had to get ready to go as well. The next day was Sunday, My Grandpa is a pastor at a Church. The church he is a pastor at is right next door so that is nice. We went to church and once we got back to their house I think all we did is do fun stuff there, like Watching TV and Playing games. And I think some time we did painting, but that could of another day. The next day we planned to go to blackberry farm. But it was raining!!! but that wouldn't stop us. Yes it was cold, And yes it was damp, but we had a great time. It also stopped raining later, so that was nice. When we got to there home we had fun too. We had dinner and watched videos, and we painted wood things like roses. Then our brothers and my Dad picked us up after doing karate.



"I THINK WE'RE RICH. I MEAN, THINK ABOUT HOW MANY MORE VIDEO GAME CONTROLLERS WE HAVE NOW THAN WHEN WE WERE IN CHINA."

— ANDREW



Being Social At Bible Bee

BY ABIGAIL

Being social at Bible Bee was DEFINITELY the best part. Although The only other thing I did at Bible Bee was study for it and do the real Orals, it is still the best part.

So after the semis and perfect orals announcement some of our friends told us that they would pick up me and my little sisters the next day to go swimming. So they picked us up the next day. We went on some slides that were called the storm chaser. They were SUPER fun. They were the longest rides I think I took there! And they were fast! They were VERY dark though. Another one we went on was a two person ride, Called the Dawn Breaker. so this is how it went: it is a very short ride, A VERY SHORT RIDE! But super fun so after just a little bit of riding it goes down REALLY STEEP so then it rockets you upward! Then you get off so anyway, we went on a ride called The Chetah Racers. Its a 2-4 rider. So 2-4 people lie down on these mats, they each have one mat to lie on, and when the light turns green each person kicks off and whoever gets down first wins.

The day of finals my mom took the five of us who were not in finals back to the waterpark. Andrew helped with Ariel for a while. Alexander and I played with Elijah and Isaac Sturk. Eventually we had to go back and get ready for finals. After Aaron got 2nd and we mobbed him. we had to eat dinner. But After that was the SQUARE DANCE! I danced with Isaac Sturk and we figure out how we're going to dance together every year until we both age out. After the square dance we wandered around with our dad talking and playing with people until 2am when we went back to our rooms.

So anyway, the next day in the morning we packed up and checked out of our rooms. Then we talked to Timothy Sample, Christiana Pepper, and her brothers, and the Alfonso's. Then we went to the water park. We did some new slides. One (I forget the name) was blue, and it could carry up to four people, so after a short ride you come to a swirl part, were you go round and round, and then it dumps the raft into a big pool of water. And another one was called: the Rippling Rhino, and it dumped you in the same pool of water. Oh, and I also played with some of my friends that time too. So we started to lea- then we went down and talked with Christiana Pepper, and her brothers and played the land of the green glass doors. And then we actually went home.



Most of the dances went well except for the one about boiling cabbage, during which I rushed around frantically grabbing the hands of any girl who would extend them to me. – Aaron





NATALIE'S FIRST BIRTHDAY

For Natalie's first birthday Liz and Brent threw a big autumn themed party for family. There was chili, corn-hole, pumpkin bowling, and general revelry for the masses.

Natalie thought her cake was just too beautiful to eat so she delicately (for a one-year-old) removed some frosting to taste. She enjoyed her gifts and family's attention, but it's clear that her all time favorite is mom (as it should be).



Happy Family on Mother's Day



NATALIE'S ONE YEAR STATS

- 21 LBS 3 OZ
- WORKING ON WALKING
- SAYS "ALL DONE" AND "BYE BYE"
- SIGNS "ALL DONE", "MORE" AND LOVES TO POINT AND WAVE
- MOVED UP TO THE DUCKIE ROOM AT DAYCARE
- LIKES: DOGGIES, KITTIES, TOYS, MOMMY AND DADDY
- FAVORITE TOY: BABY WALKER



Natalie enjoying her presents



Grandpa Jeff's still got the touch



The Land Before Time

By Andrew

The Land before Time was a movie produced by George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. It chronicles the journeys of 5 young dinosaurs attempting to survive during a worldwide famine, and trying to make their way to the Great Valley, which is still fertile.

The movie centers on Littlefoot, a young brachiosaurus, whose mother dies defending him from a T-rex. He sets out for the Great Valley on his own, but eventually meets up with other hatchlings of various kinds.

The movie emphasizes the theme of working together with different kinds of people. The young dinosaurs can usually overcome any obstacle when together, and have little success when separated.

The movie is sweet, but somewhat short, giving the characters little time to grow and develop. It is my personal opinion that the desolate atmosphere of the planet is overplayed. Also the characters undergo some palette changes which are rather confusing.

However, all of the characters have rather cute personalities, and they mostly make up for these otherwise annoying flaws. All in all, The Land Before Time is a heartwarming story, and is pleasant to watch, though it has some unattained potential.



"I love you!
Yep, yep,
yep!"

—Attalia,
imitating
Ducky from
Land before
Time

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

By Aaron

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade is a 1989 adventure film directed by Steven Spielberg. It begins with a scene from Indy's childhood, when child Indy thwarts a group of looters attempting to steal the Cross of Coronado. Indiana recovers the cross and brings it to his home but the looters follow him back and recover the cross.

The timeline jumps forward twenty-six years, when grown-up Indy recovers the Cross of Coronado successfully. Upon returning home, he is contacted by Walter Donovan, a man seeking the Holy Grail. Indy turns him down, telling him to contact his father, before discovering that his father was already hunting for the Holy Grail—and has just disappeared. Indy gets a package from his father, a diary containing all his research on the Grail, and heads to Venice. He meets Dr. Elsa Schneider there, and the two of them find another clue in the catacombs before being attacked by members of the Brotherhood of the Cruciform Sword, dedicated to protecting the Grail. Fortunately, there are two speedboats nearby so Indy steals one to escape. After rescuing the group's leader, Indy learns that his father is being held in a castle in Austria.

After examining the second clue, Indy sends his father's friend Marcus Brody to Alexandretta with a map leading to the Grail while himself and Elsa infiltrate the castle. Elsa betrays Indy and his father to the Nazis, but they escape after stealing a motorcycle and defeating four armed guards with a flagpole. Then they board a Zeppelin, steal a bi-plane, and destroy two Luftwaffe planes before safely arriving in Alexandretta.

The Nazis easily capture Brody and set on their way to find the map. Unfortunately, they brought a tank along. Indy rescues Brody and blows up the tank by jamming the gun with a rock, killing the driver, and jumping off just before it falls off a cliff.

Indy and his crew get to the cave where the Grail is supposed to be and get themselves captured. Donovan, revealed to be working with the Nazis, forces Indy to retrieve the Grail for him by fatally wounding Indy's father. Indy clears the three traps with the information in his father's journal to reach a room holding several chalices. Donovan drinks from the wrong chalice and dies, while Indy takes the right chalice and uses it to save his father.

At the last minute, Elsa grabs the chalice and tries to escape with it, which somehow triggers the temple's destruction. Elsa plummets into the abyss, going after the Grail, while Indiana and his crew ride off into the sunset.

In my opinion, the plot was rather poor. The entire movie felt like one long chase scene—the main characters kept brushing with death but miraculously escaping at the last minute. I counted at least four vehicles with keys left conveniently left in the ignition for Indy to steal. The legends about the Grail were all pagan nonsense with Christian veneer, for the Bible makes abundantly clear how to achieve eternal life—and it's through faith in Jesus Christ, not magic relics.

The action scenes were well-done and exciting though, and all the acting was good. My favorite character was probably Sallah, who was played by John Rhys-Davies and brought some nice comedic relief to the show.



VACATION VIBES

By NATHANIEL FRITZ

Nathaniel and Mary have now been married for 11 wonderful years and continue to live in Columbia, Missouri with their two dogs, Penny and Kermit.

Nathaniel works for Veterans United Home Loans and brings a homeschooled energy to the company that they've otherwise been lacking. Mary works for The Bluffs Nursing Home and won her 5th Department Employee of the Year in 2025 (they basically need to rename the award after her at this point).



The highlight of their year was their vacation to Utah and Las Vegas in October—it was the perfect balance of great weather, beautiful scenery in Utah and the appropriate number of Elvis impersonators driving scooters in Las Vegas.

Penny and Kermit are now 11 and 10, respectively, and entering their golden years—Penny in particular has really begun leaning into the retiree lifestyle, waking up every day by 5:30 AM, eating dinner by 4 PM and fast asleep by 7 PM.

Together, the four are looking forward to what 2026 brings!



Attalia latched onto Aunt Mary during our Fritz Family Mini Reunion in July.



Mom and dad were able to visit Nathaniel and Mary and grandpuppies.



Wonderful Christmas celebration at the old homestead.



Problematic Playset

By AARON

For Easter this year we wanted to get a play set for my little siblings. We found an old, sturdy wooden play set on Craigslist that said it only required “screwdrivers and wrenches” to disassemble. So me and Dad went over there with about four electric screwdrivers, two wrenches, and a few other power tools just in case.

The play set was at the top of a hill by an old farmhouse, and it was very large. The wood was old but it still looked sturdy. It came with a swing set, a tower, two slides, and another house that was not technically part of the play set but came along with it.

As we began to unscrew pieces of wood and carry them back to our minivan, we ran into a problem: some of the screws used to attach the play set

together had square heads instead of Phillips heads. We had brought along a good variety of screw heads but only one that was square—and that one didn’t fit quite right and ended up breaking.

Then we ran into a bigger problem: many of the pieces were nailed together—nailed together with massive, twisty nails that bind almost like screws do but super hard to unscrew. Apparently “screwdrivers and wrenches” was a bit of an understatement.

We were able to get some of them undone by hammering them several times, but some of them we had to saw off with the reciprocating saw.

At the end of Day 1, we left with a load of various pieces of lumber, a broken saw blade, and the realization that this was going to be a lot harder than advertised. We stashed the pieces in the second garage and went out again the second day.

For Day 2 we grabbed all the extra saw blades we had and some sledgehammers for particularly stuck pieces. We went through a lot of saw blades that day. Many screws were screwed in at awkward angles and we would either have to struggle with a vise grip or use the saw to cut them off, leading to sharp pieces of metal sticking out in awkward places.

We managed to detach the swing set from the main tower, but the tower and playhouse were too big to fit in the car and were not going to come apart very easily. Time for another plan.

We rented a large trailer from a friend of ours and came back with all three of us brothers. The truck could only seat two, so Dad had to drop us off at the site in our van, then drive back to pick up the truck and bring it to the site.

The play set was on the top of a grassy hill, and the recent rains had made the ground slippery, so Dad had a hard time getting up to the top. He eventually made it, and the four of us were (barely) able to load everything into the trailer. As we were about to leave the owner of the play set came up and told us that a weird, chicken-coop-esque building standing nearby was free and we could take it if we wanted. We threw it in the trailer just for fun. (cont.)



Figure 1: Before



Figure 2: Transporting



Figure 3: Painting

tomorrow was Easter.

So they brought out another pump-jack and some plywood to try to lift it up. We tried one layer and it wasn't quite tall enough, so we had to slowly lower it and do a second layer. Then we slowly, slowly got the trailer hitched up again. It still wouldn't get out of the rut, but thankfully the owner had a bunch of small pond rocks we could use to dry up the mud. The truck was eventually able to get out and we could finally go home.

Well, Dad could, that is. We had to wait for Dad to drive back to drop off the truck, which took a good bit because of the heavy trailer, and then come back with the van. After we got home, we waited for the girls to go to bed, and then Dad drove our van back to our friend's house to pick up the trailer. We managed to wrestle everything out of the trailer and into our yard. We even got a few of the slides put up at around 11:00 at night while Dad drove the truck back.

At last, the play set was home! It took several more weeks of hard work to assemble the rest of the play set, take out all the dangerously-placed screws, and paint it with several coats of paint—but it looked really good when it was all done!

However, when we compare the original list of requirements for disassembling the play set (screwdrivers and wrenches) with the actual list of requirements...

- Screwdrivers
- Wrenches
- Screwdrivers with square heads
- Socket wrenches
- Sawzall
- Sawzall blades (as many as possible)
- Sledgehammers (as many as possible)
- Screwdrivers with *star* heads (for that one screw)
- Vise grips (for twisting out stubborn screws)
- Duct tape (for holding trunk together)
- F-350 truck
- 6-and-a-half foot-wide log trailer
- Plywood, rocks, and pump-jack (included)

... I still feel we deserve more compensation than a chicken coop. ✖

Problematic Playset

By AARON

Going downhill was easier, and Dad got almost all the way to the road before stopping to tell the owner we were leaving. Unfortunately, he had stopped in a level place and the truck was stuck.

It was a good thing the owners knew a lot about trucks, but this time it was pretty bad. They tried rocking back and forth, then suggested that Dad should unhitch and face the truck downhill to pick up some speed. They did that, but when they tried to re-hitch they found out that the trailer had sunk too low and the jack wasn't tall enough to lift it up. They suggested that we should just leave the truck there and come back on a drier day, but we explained that we were *renting* the truck from a friend and couldn't just leave it in their yard overnight. Anyway,



Figure 4: After

Lateral Puzzles

Alexander's Lateral

Wojtek (pronounced /voi'tek/) was a Polish soldier in the 20th century, who went from being a private to a corporal in the 22nd Artillery Supply Company, even though it was very unlikely for him to be enlisted in the army at all. What was unique about him?

HINTS

- Wojtek became a soldier to pass certain regulations.
- Wojtek helped carry crates of ammunition that usually required four men.
- Wojtek eventually became the emblem of the 22nd Artillery Supply Company.
- He was very hairy.

Answer

Wojtek was a Syrian brown bear who was given to Polish soldiers as a gift by an Iranian shepherd near Hamedan, Iran, during World War II. He enjoyed wrestling, beer, and even ate lit cigarettes. The British transport ship forbade animal mascots and pets, so he was enlisted in the army as a private. During the Battle of Monte Cassino he helped carry crates of ammunition that usually required four men, which earned him the promotion to corporal.

Andrew's Lateral

On Friday, 17 June 1774, the Massachusetts assembly was discussing sending representatives to the First Continental Congress. However, when Gov. Gage heard of the assembly, he sent a proclamation commanding them to disperse. How did they bend the rules in order to keep meeting?

HINTS

- They did not change the place or time.

Aaron's Lateral

In *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, special effect technicians made 1,000 mechanical rats even though they had 5,000 disease-free rats bred specifically for the show. Why did they need the mechanical rats?

HINTS

- The mechanical rats were supposed to look exactly the same as live rats.
- The mechanical rats were used in a scene where no live rats were used.
- According to the story, Indiana Jones is in the catacombs. The sewers are full of liquid petroleum rather than water.
- Using real rats for the scene would probably have violated state laws.

Answer

The mechanical rats were used in a scene where the catacombs were lit on fire. Lighting live rats on fire would be impossible and dangerous (and may have violated animal rights laws).

- The messenger arrived at the meeting hall.
- The method they used was non-violent.
- They avoided receiving the message altogether.

Answer

They locked the messenger out.

Nate's Lateral

How did a book publisher's mistake help sell millions of bracelets decades later?

HINTS

- The publisher accidentally left out a key page that was supposed to protect the author.
- Because of that, anyone could print the book cheaply and sell it.
- The novel centered on Christians asking a particular question.
- Around 100 years later, a youth leader was inspired by that book.

Answer

Charles M. Sheldon, a Congregationalist pastor in Topeka, Kansas, wrote the novel *In His Steps* in 1896. In it, he challenged Christians to pause before making decisions and ask, "What would Jesus do?"

The original publisher made a crucial mistake and left out the copyright page. This caused the book to immediately fall into the public domain. Other publishers were free to print and sell it without paying Sheldon or asking permission. Because of this, *In His Steps* was printed in huge quantities at low prices. It became incredibly widespread, eventually selling around 30 million copies worldwide.

Nearly 100 years later, a youth leader named Janie Tinklenberg was inspired by Sheldon's book. Wanting a simple, constant reminder for her teens to make Christ-like choices, she shortened the question to four letters: WWJD. She had the letters printed on cloth bracelets for her youth group.

The idea exploded. Those WWJD bracelets spread far beyond her church, becoming a global Christian fad and a huge merch phenomenon.



REMEMBERING GRANDMA LORNA

BY ANNA

January 2025 marked the passing of one year into the next, and the passing of Grandma Lorna from this life into the next. It was a sad way for us to begin the new year. However, she was the most ready person to move on from this earthly life that I have ever known. Having severe back pain for years, Lorna had been begging God to upgrade her accommodations to heaven for a very long time. So we were all happy for her as well. Things I love to remember about Grandma:

- Her love of God, family, and vegetables
- Her incredible memory for everyone's name, age, birthday, and phone number
- How she taught me to crochet and bake bread
- How she and Grandpa Roy balanced each other out
- How she mellowed and allowed the great-grandkids to eat ice cream for breakfast and enter the living room



She may be remembered for her love of knick-knacks, but her real treasure was her family. Usually all she wanted for a present in her later years was a family reunion.



I am so glad that Grandma Lorna was able to meet our six children, including three great-granddaughters that she waited so long to see.



Lorna age 3

Lorna Helen (Hass) Sellin

July 12, 1933 — January 4, 2025

She was born July 12, 1933 in Gleason, WI, to Arnold and Ella (Burmeister) Hass. On July 27, 1957, she married Elroy Sellin, her husband of 44 years. Together they had three children Sharla (Sellin) Fritz, Steven Sellin, and Shelly Sellin.



Lorna at High-school Graduation



Remembering "Candyman" Jerry Smith

BY ANNA

Gerald "Jerry" Smith was born September 28, 1941. However, we wouldn't meet him until 2020, when a walk through the neighborhood in Boulder Hill would change our lives. Candyman Jerry was sitting on his riding mower in his overalls and he calls out, "What a nice family!" We went over and started talking and shortly thereafter he'd adopted us all as grandkids and we him as honorary grandpa. He told us that all the kids he taught in school would eventually call him Candyman and that was the best name for us to call him too. In a time when everything felt a bit upside down and out of place it was really special to make that connection.

Later we'd move to Rockford, IL, and then he moved to Elkhorn, WI about an hour north. He cheered our kids on in Bible Bee, we visited him in the hospital, and our relationship was rekindled. When he recovered, he would drive down and attend church with us in Rockford. As his health would decline further we'd go up and visit him in WI more and more. There would always be a box of candy and gifts for the kids.

Candyman Jerry grew up in the rural farmlands of southern IL and would go on to travel around the world as a proud Marine. He was a Christian, father, grandfather, teacher, fisherman, and proud to be an American. He touched lives of missionaries he supported all around the world and countless kids he taught throughout the years in IL.

The last thing Candyman Jerry said to as we were leaving from that last fishing trip was his familiar blessing, "The Lord bless you, and keep you: The Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Now who's preaching!" (From Numbers 6:24-26) His life was a benediction to the Lord and others.



Candyman Jerry loved to fish and to teach others how to fish. This was July 20th, the last fishing trip we'd ever take with him, when he gifted each of our kids with their own poles. Andrew had never caught a fish before fishing with Candyman Jerry. We were sure glad later that we stayed until Andrew caught one. We only saw him one more time to say goodbye before he passed away on August 3, 2025.



Candyman Jerry would usually take us out to eat at Culver's after church and make sure the kids got plenty of fries and ice cream. We'll always think of him when we see blackberries, especially on top of ice cream.



S

The Family Times

12/25/25

Special Moments



MY MARVELOUS BIRTHDAY

By ABIGAIL

On my birthday I had a art theme. I got a sketch book, books about a girl who likes Art, and a stationary set etc. my mom made a cake that looks like a artist pallet it is white and there are other colors of frosting squeezed on it like paint. All in all it was a Marvelous Birthday. 🎨



ARIEL'S CUTE TURTLE BIRTHDAY

By ABIGAIL

Ariel came out SSSSOOOOOO slow; she was more than a week late! So we gave her a turtle themed birthday. We put blue crate paper as the ocean, green crate paper as reeds, and we cut out purple fish, and Alexander cut out a turtle shape from a large piece of paper and colored it and made a big 1.



FANTASTIC

FOUR YEAR OLD

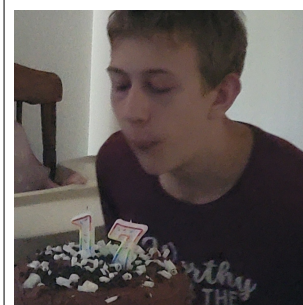
This year Attalia turned 4 years old in a swirl of golden glitter, befitting the beautiful yellow princess she is. Attalia is such a joyful sweetheart who cheers the hearts of those around her.

She is growing into a big helper, trying to help mom in the kitchen and play with her baby sister.

Her grandparents and great grandma came to attend the royal banquet.



"I don't want to be a kid. I want to be a princess!" – Attalia



SMART 17

For Aaron's 17th birthday his siblings made a very complex Link-themed treasure hunt that he had to complete before finding his present, an ocarina.



Alexander's 13th Birthday

By ALEXANDER

When I woke up I found that my door and several other places had a green Rugg Family Crest banner on it. I also found that we had a new visitor: Sir Fred the Inflatable Knight (Sir Bert, his cousin, was to arrive later) And I got some great pictures with him before he decided to return to the top of the piano. The music machine had also been switched to orchestral battle music, and Abigail gave me new headphones, which worked great (so great, in fact, that I got Aaron and Andrew each a pair for Christmas) and the grandparents came over and we played Scrabble and croquet! After dinner, we opened my presents. First, I got a real helmet! And then I got a really cool foam shield. Aaron made me a stand for my helmet and I kept both the helmet and my shield below the swords. Speaking of which, the biggest highlight of the day was that I got my own sword! (And that it was longer than the brothers' swords!)



ANDREW'S BIRTHDAY

By ANDREW

On my Birthday I woke up and tried to open the door. Strangely, I noticed that there was significant resistance. It turned out that during decorating someone attached the two giant spike balloons to the door that were going to fall on me if I opened the door all the way. I left them for Alexander. He somehow expected them and they missed.



For breakfast we ate cinnamon rolls, strawberries, and cheese. All of which were very good.

After that, Aaron and Alexander took me on a treasure hunt to find three pieces of paper. Each of were cut into pieces, and when put together revealed the titles of three games they were given me as well as the next clue. After I had completed the treasure hunt, we played the games until the grandparents arrived.

When the grandparents arrived, I went upstairs to talk with them, and then we ate Mom's pizza for lunch.

After lunch I opened presents, which consisted mainly of money, trail-mix and other snacks, which is what I had asked for.

After that, we had Chocolate Zucchini cake and homemade ice cream, and then played Oligarchy, with me, Grandma Mary, and Alexander + Uncle Dave on one side, (they teamed up as one character) and Aaron, Grandpa Jeff, and Abigail on the other side. It went back and forth, and we began to gain the upper hand until Aaron landed on Vector. Vector was our property, and it was completely upgraded, meaning he had to pay \$1600. This was great, except for the fact that he played the Geoff Ruggerio card, reversing the bill. We had been spending all our money to get the Building victory, so we couldn't pay the bill, and had to resign. But it still was fun.

We talked with the grandparents until they had to go. After that we had the pizza leftovers for dinner. We also watched a Tongarango show and *Indiana Jones: The Last Crusade*.



I got first and last place in my first karate tournament. Amazing.

— Aaron (sarcastic voice)



ROCKY'S DOJO OPEN MARTIAL ARTS KARATE TOURNAMENT

By ALEXANDER

We did our first karate tournament in February. We signed up for both Sparring and Kata.

Kata is a memorized series of moves that make it look like you're fighting. Point sparring is if you hit the torso or head (not face) you get a point. First was kata, so we all went to the appointed rings. Dad had a couple of opponents, Aaron had none (he was given first automatically), Andrew had one, and I had almost ten. Not only that, but my ring had to sit for a while and then had to sit longer when the one kid in the younger division came, and then had to wait even longer as the women's division came and did their kata. I'm not sure why they got to go first even though we were already there, but...

Anyway, I didn't get first, second, or third. Aaron got first (because he was the only one there), Andrew won against his opponent, and Dad got first as well.

Then for sparring, Aaron was again the only person so he won, Andrew lost but there were only two people so he still got second.

I had again a whole bunch of competitors, I and I got to the final match. During the entire match my opponent's instructor was running around the ring telling him to kick again, do it harder, follow up, and such. I lost, but at least I got second at something.





Spoudazō

By AARON

This year I joined an online Bible study group named Spoudazō. Spoudazō is a Greek word meaning “be diligent” and it is used in 2 Timothy 2:15 to encourage Christians to work hard and handle the Word of Truth rightly. Later in the year, Andrew joined as well.

We study the Bible all throughout the year. During Bible Bee season we focus on the Bible Bee materials, memorizing the memory passages and studying the study passage Bible Bee gives us, but we also study other books during the off-season to keep our brains sharp and to learn more about God’s Word.

We meet every week on Tuesday. We begin our meetings by prayer. Then we recite a chapter of the study passage, with each member taking a portion. Usually we study each chapter of the study passage individually, so the first week we’ll study cross references, background, and Greek for Ephesians 1, then the same for Ephesians 2 the next week and so on. Sometimes we go into breakout rooms to recite memory passages to each other.

Then we do a few quizzes on whatever we had to study that week. The quizzes can be fairly easy or terribly hard, depending on who volunteered to make them that day. After that, we practice buzzer questions for the rest of the meeting. Each person takes a turn asking a question and people buzz in on an online buzzing platform. A lot of different questions get asked, but whether the questions are profound, impossible, or hilarious, everyone has a great time. It paid off, too, because at the end of Bible Bee this year Spoudazō members took the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places in the competition.

We also have a Google chat group where we talk about stuff we’ve learned and quiz each other on stuff we’ve learned.

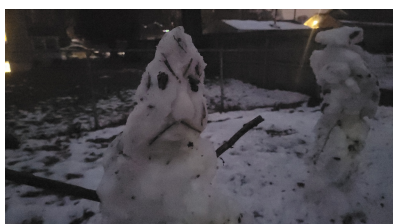
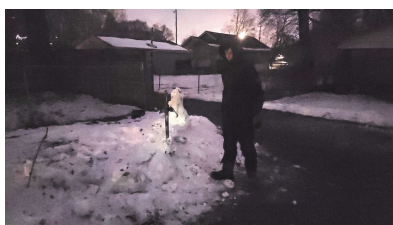
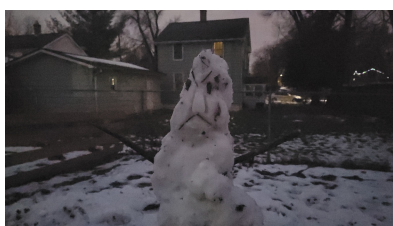
- Nadia will ask theme questions, like “Which of these BEST describes the people’s actions in the immediate before context of 1 Samuel 12:20-25?”
- I’ll ask background questions, like “Who was the person who led the mob to destroy the temple of Artemis in 401 AD?”
- Timothy will ask memory passage questions, like “What FIVE things are mentioned as being everlasting in your memory passages?”
- Hannah will ask any type of question so long as it’s tricky. “What region was Mount Tabor located in at the time of Jesus?”

And then there was the one time Nadia quizzed me and Hannah on Greek words and Ephesians content in the main thread of the chat. We answered 50 questions and posted 325 new comments in the chat (because approximately every other one was something along the lines of “Ha! Beat you!” or “ARGH” or “Beseech is so hard to spell fast.”)

And of course, during the off-season we use the chat to have profound conversations about sophisticated topics, like whether Rebekah dismounted from her camel or just plumb fell off when she saw Isaac, and how we would want our spouses to fall off their camel when they first saw us. Or about brown sugar and whether it’s proper to eat it by spoonfuls out of the bowl. Or what food is most likely to boost your chances of winning in Finals (99% dark chocolate is the best, apparently.) Or whether GIFs should be allowed in the main chat and whether animated WebPs escape the ban. Or whether you’d prefer a sebu, a water buffalo, or a baby kangaroo, and what do you MEAN it’s spelled “zebu” and I’ve been spelling it wrong my whole life?

Sometimes we go back and look through the pictures of the competition to laugh and grimace at all the awful faces we make during the question rounds. And sometimes we talk about how God’s Word has impacted our life, or exchange prayer requests. Sometimes we talk about Santa and the tooth fairy, and sometimes we talk about the war in Gaza. Whether we’re being serious or silly, we always try to have God-glorifying conduct and I’m so grateful that God has given me this community of friends. 🙏





THE SNOW ORCS

By ALEXANDER

Only a year ago, Crognik's forces had all but disappeared. Scro was abandoned. Only a few orc bands were found scattered in the hills, ill-prepared and with broken weapons.

But we were deceived. Beneath the buildings of Scro, under the mountains, Crognik had retaken his place as the King Orc in the underground caverns, and was expanding his army. As he was thought to be dead or have fled across the sea, his work continued without hinder. In the heart of the mountains iron and steel were plentiful for his weapons.

On the fifteenth of the eleventh month, word reached the fortress of Ruggmark in the Drofkcor valleys that the outer villages were pillaged and burned. Scouts were sent and reported back. Scro was rebuilt. Crognik had returned.

Over the passing days more news arrived. Crognik had garrisoned an army of around four hundred thousand orcs behind Scro's walls.

A council was immediately called in Ruggmark, and the decision was made by King Dad to march with full strength on Scro. The force, which amounted to two hundred thousand, was led by the valiant knights: Sir Aaron, Sir Andrew, and Sir Alexander. There was also a princess that came along, named Abigail.

The journey to Scro was, to say the least, depressing. The once beautiful hills now were covered with dust and ash, the villages were burned and void of life. The orcs had left their mark.

After an hour's ride from Ruggmark, they reached Scro. Though the wall and the keep had been rebuilt, most of the city still lay strewn upon the mountains. The darkness of night fell.

Upon reaching the gate, a horn sounded from deep within. The gate opened to reveal a hideous figure in a black cloak and a gold crown on his head. He was riding a large gray wolf, covered in brown patches and wearing a bridle with a horned helmet. Behind him thousands of Orcs chanted, "Crognik! Crognik! Crognik!". As Crognik raised his sword, the orcs burst into an unearthly yell and descended upon the knights of Ruggmark. Soon the air was filled with the noise of war.

The three knights and lady Abigail went straight to take down Crognik. But before they got to him, four of the biggest orcs they had ever seen appeared. Crognik's royal guards. Ducking beneath a slash, Alexander gave a mighty swing and sent the guard's head flying. Andrew and Aaron also did likewise, and cut the orcs to pieces. And as the last pulled his sword back to hit Aaron, Abigail drove him through.

As they approached Crognik, he spun around and sent daggers in every direction. Dodging the knives, Aaron and Andrew approached and battled in close combat. Alexander, however, took the chance and sent a flaming arrow into his stomach. For whatever reason, Crognik exploded, sending fire across the valley, lighting up the night. The orcs, terrified, began to flee behind Scro's walls. Once inside, however, the fire reached the city, and destroyed the orcs.

Crognik was defeated. The knights of Ruggmark returned to the Drofkcor valleys.



The Duel

By Alexander

Once upon a time, there were three young men, riding on horses through the woods. In front of the road, a deer jumped in front of them. All three of them drew their swords and stabbed it. But then, the question remained. Who would get it?

"I know!" shouted the first, lighting off his horse. "We shall duel for it."

The others followed suit. The first one was named Aaron, whose sword was named Excalibur, the second was named Andrew, whose sword was Windsong, and the third was named Alexander, whose sword was named Strider's Sword.

The duel commenced. Alexander charged forward, sword over head, while Aaron prepared, sword point out, and Andrew rushed in, sword in front. And so, they locked in combat. After half an hour of the duel, they all noticed that the deer had regained consciousness and was running away. The trio remounted their horses, and went together to catch the deer. They decided to share it, and from then on became the three musketeers.



The End

The Tally Karate Kid

By ALEXANDER

Twelve o'clock. Rain pours down on the streets of Rockford. Not a soul stirs, except on the corner store in a downtown back alley. Four vandals break down the door and start loading up the valuables. But as the last piece was carried out...

A shadowy figure leaped off of the roof onto the robber! Two robbers jump out of the back of the truck and rush to help, but with a kick to the groin and a punch to the solar plexus, they fall to the ground. The last one comes out, and pulls out a knife. The shadowy figure disappears. Then suddenly, a knee lands hard in the robber's backbone, and he falls to the ground. The shadowy figure leaps away just as the police arrive.

THE END



Jurassic Pond

By ANDREW

Grandpa has been doing a lot of renovations to the koi pond, and he wants to replace one of the stone walls with concrete. He also wanted to make a T-rex skull in the wall as an Easter egg. He asked me to make a concrete mold for him to do it.

Making a T-rex mold had several challenges. First, my printer bed is 200 mm². Grandpa wanted the mold to be 27 in. Now not only were the two in different measuring systems, but the T-rex was much larger than my printing area. So much larger that I had to split the mold into 22 pieces. Because the pieces wouldn't look nearly as nice as when put together as it would when printed in a single go, I had to make sure they looked like fragments of real T-rex skull. Also, because it was so big, it would use a lot of plastic. I used up almost a whole roll on the first two pieces, and then slowly made more and more improvements to filament efficiency, making it as hollow as possible without actually allowing it to cave in while printing. To make it go faster I also used a bigger nozzle and layer height.

Eventually even though the pieces were uneven and were a patchwork of different colors, it was actually finished in time for Christmas. Although it remains to be seen whether it will work, it was a fun and instructive project.





Digital Archaeology

By NATE

Deep in the basement of the Rugg house, a relic of history has lain dormant for many years wearily gathering dust: the Rugg boys Apple][+, one of the first computers they ever used. It was long believed that the countless treasures that lay inside the (actually) floppy discs had rotted away years ago. However, an intrepid team of armature archaeologists, undeterred by reason or common sense, had a major breakthrough and were able to connect the aging 8-bit system to a modern computer by sending audio signals via the microphone jack to emulate the sounds of old tape recorders used to store and transmit data in ancient times.

Another difficulty the team had to overcome was the lack of a suitable screen. Even with an RCA to HDMI adapter, the Ruggs had no spare monitor that could be used. In a strange mismatch of technology, the team ended up settling on broadcasting the HDMI signal wirelessly via WebRTC to another Apple device, an iPad (and later to a Chromebook), to finally bring the machine to life again.

Now that the team could actually see and type, countless hours were spent tuning and debugging the fragile audio connection to just the right volume levels to recover the 1's and 0's frozen in time, including some of the Rugg kids' very first programs.

Notable discoveries include Horse Race, a horse racing (gambling) game written entirely by the brothers Ben and Nate, which allowed players to bet on horses, using (unseeded) pseudo-random numbers to select a winner. Another fine specimen of early, nearly prehistoric, coding was that of the rewriting of `I H E A L A M O`, which is claimed to be "TOTALLY REDESIGNED BY NATHAN & BEN RUGG, INSPIRATION BY CALEB AND LIZ RUGG" with special thanks attributed to "SURF NINJAS" and "CHUCK NORRIS." When the player inevitably loses (due to the extremely unbalanced game play), the user is consoled with:

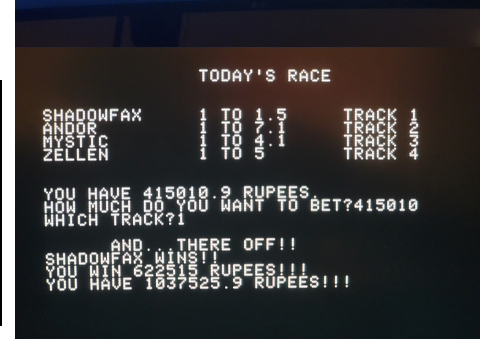
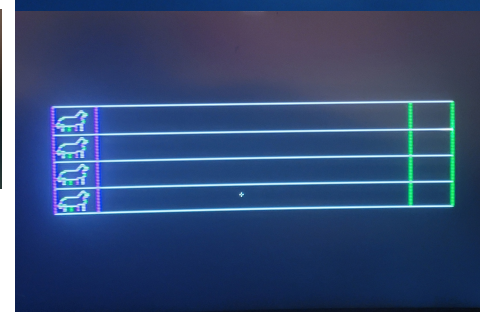
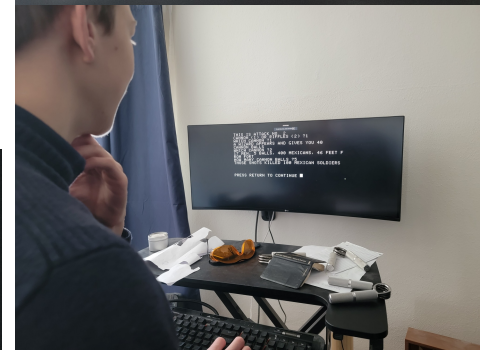
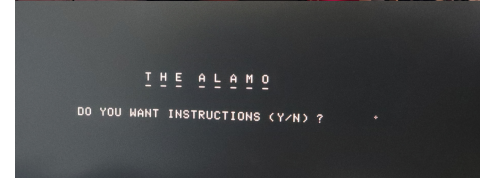
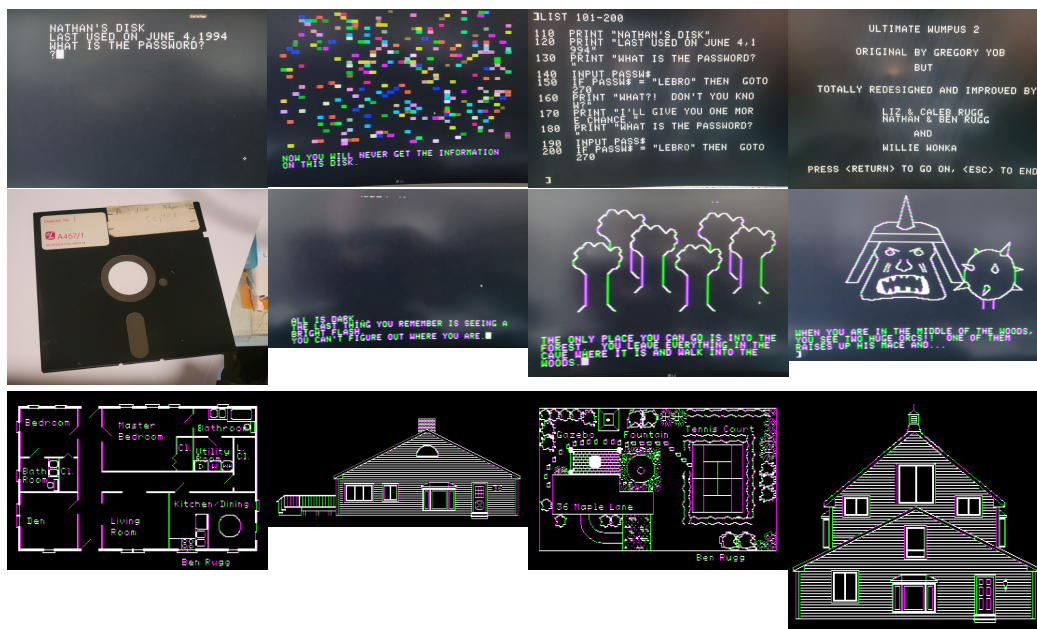
```
YOU YELLOW BELLIED SAP SUCKER!!! THE
MEXICAN ARMY HAS TAKEN OVER THE FORT
AND HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF TAKING OVER
TEXAS TOO!!!

AND SINCE YOU HAVE DONE SO BAD, WE'LL
MAKE YOU KISS SCOTT!!!

PRESS RETURN FOR ANOTHER GAME
```

Perhaps the most intriguing find was the partially written game called Phantasie, containing not only a gripping opening story line, but also hi-res graphics hand drawn by the Rugg boys themselves.

Many other artifacts of varying quality and value were unearthed, yet their work continues as spare time allows. Will anything be found to top these marvels? Only time will tell. (Spoiler, probably not.)

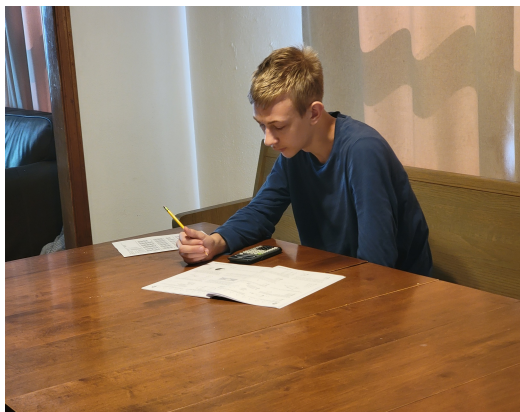




AARON'S TOP ACT TIPS

Study tips for the ACT

- Take lots of practice tests. Try to do at least one all the way through, with no breaks. The ACT is a long test and it's easy to get tired out by the first few sections.
- After taking a practice test, go back and review all the questions you missed. Try to figure out why you made that mistake. Maybe you misread a graph axis, or didn't understand some of the concepts used?
- If you didn't understand a concept, go look it up and make sure you understand it before your next test.
- For the Math section, if you need to solve for a number but you can't remember how to do it, try plugging in one of the options. With luck you should find the correct answer within a couple of tries.
- For the English section, remember that the answer can be (and often is) No Change.
- For the Reading section, if you struggle with the time limit, try skimming the questions first before reading the passage.
- For the Science section, make sure you're reading the graphs and diagrams correctly. Sometimes one axis is on a different scale, or a logarithmic scale.
- For *all* the sections, be sure to read the questions carefully so that you don't get tricked. It's important to not go too slowly, but if you misread a question you might as well just not answer.
- Pray before the test, do your best, and trust God with the rest!



Painting projects from sleepovers at the grandparents decorate the girls' closet door.

Aaron did all his ACT prep on his own. He knows what he is talking about for his test prep tips. Since he was hitting 35-36 consistently on practice tests, what did mom want to review last minute on test day...



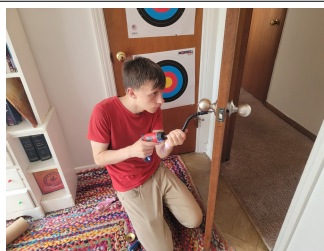
If you guessed cell phone usage, you are correct, as we had to have a friend pick up him while we were at a funeral and he had to be able to power off/on, text, and call after frying his brain on a major test.

Aaron did great, hitting 35 on the ACT and successfully getting home.



SISTERLY COFFEE DATE

ATTALIA AND ARIEL FINGER PAINTING WHILE THEIR BIG SIBLINGS ARE ALL STUDYING.



ANDREW IS BECOMING VERY HANDY AND REPLACED THE DOORKNOB ALL ON HIS OWN.

T

The Family Times

12/25/25

Travel



GROUP PHOTO- NATE AND AARON ON THE RIGHT SIDE NEAR THE FRONT

CHESS.COM MEETUP 2025 IN CANCUN

BY AARON

This year Dad and I traveled to Cancun for the 2025 Chess.com meetup. Going through customs went very smoothly—we handed them a letter, showed them our passports, and got directed outside the building, where a Chess.com shuttle was waiting for us. In our rooms we found a charcuterie board with chocolate chess pieces, as well as a gift bag with some merch and a book. The bellhop told us that all the restaurants and snacks were free (aka had been paid for by Chess.com) and we could just order whatever we wanted.

We got our few things set up and examined the mini-fridge. Water comes in cans in Mexico, apparently. We gave Mom a call and ate some sandwiches for dinner. I recited some verses to Dad and then we went to bed.

The next day we got up somewhat early and went to hear the CEO's keynote speech. It turned out to be a rap, which was kinda weird but at least it was interesting. We ate dinner with some of Dad's coworkers, and I played in my first internationally rated blitz tournament. I scored 3.5/6, beating one master and almost beating a second master, which was pretty good.

The next day we listened to a report about improvements to cheat detection over the past year and took a picture with Danny Rensch. I met online with my study group to review our practice test in the afternoon. One of the people we had dinner with that night was from China, so we talked about that. Then we had to go to bed early because we wanted to see the Chichen Itza and the tour was leaving early in the morning.

We got up around 5 and went down to our tour van. Our guide was very knowledgeable and told us a lot about the temple and the surrounding villages. We saw the main temple, a ball court, and various other structures for idol worship. We learned that if you clap near the temple opening it makes an echo that sounds like a bird chirping, and that twice every year on the equinoxes the sunlight makes the pattern of a snake on the staircases.

There were a bunch of vendors around yelling for us to buy stuff, so eventually we stopped to get some souvenirs.
(cont.)





ARKANSAS ADVENTURE

BY AARON

This year we took a trip as a family down to Arkansas for the Arkansas Scriptorium. In preparation, us three brothers memorized parts of Revelation and our family put together a short play

on Ruth 2.

The event ran from Friday to Sunday. We arrived on Friday afternoon, when we ate dinner, listened to a message on Revelation, and watched/performed a play on Ruth (four families each performed one chapter.)

We also did the first of the Scripture Challenge Rounds. In the Scripture Challenge Rounds, contestants are broken up into four teams. Each team sits around a table. The moderator reads a question and the first person to buzz gets to answer for their team.

Last year we competed our team came in solid last, with about 1,800 points less than first place after the first round. I wanted to do better this time, so I made a buzzer training program and spent most of the car ride down practicing.

It paid off. My team, the Falcons, took an early 600-point lead.

Alexander and Andrew were on a separate team in 3rd, which was kinda sad but at least this way we ensured that we wouldn't *all* finish last.

When we came back the next day, the moderator told me that I was doing a little too well and that I could only answer one question per round so that the other teams could catch up. So whenever I knew the answer I would loudly whisper the answer to my teammates. Our team ended with 2875 points above second place at the end of the first round.

Unfortunately, during the second round I couldn't help my teammates and we ended getting second place.

We helped clean up and then we drove over to the park to hand out tracts + snacks for a while. Then we went back and had a picnic at the host's house, which was probably the most fun part of the whole event.

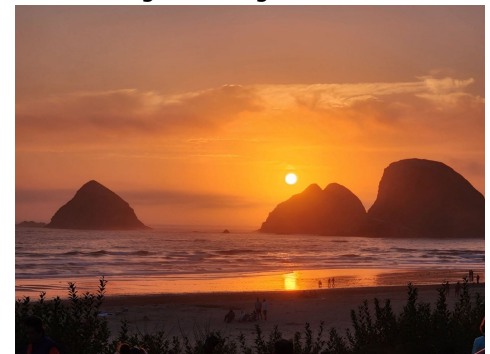
We played Ultimate Football, Duck Duck Goose, Ghosts in the Graveyard, and just talked with people until it got too late and we had to go back to the hotel.

On Sunday we came back to the host's house for a house church service. We sang some songs and discussed Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4. Then we had lunch and talked about stuff before heading back home to Illinois.



Oregon Coast

John and Sharla Fritz are still riding off into the sunset together 45 years after saying "I do." This year they enjoyed a particularly lovely trip to the Pacific Northwest, reconnecting with old friends in Montana, and enjoying waterfall and beachfront views along the Oregon coastline.



Fun Fact: Abigail and her friend/pen-pal Ivalee were born on exactly the same day.

